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Subject: PSIO SITREP UPDATE #22 [Final] – 16 Feb 2022 – Freedom Convoy Solidarity Activity

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PRELIMINARY INFORMATION ONLY: SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS SITUATION DEVELOPS. INFORMATION MAY BE BASED ON UNCONFIRMED REPORTING.

UPDATE #22 [This will be the final update unless situational changes dictate otherwise]

DATE/TIME: February 16, 2022 @ 17:00 hrs

PURPOSE: To provide aggregated situational awareness regarding “Freedom Convoy” solidarity activity impacting Alberta.

BACKGROUND: No change.

CURRENT STATUS:

Coutts Border Crossing & Milk River:

- As of 09:00 hrs Wed 16 Feb, RCMP report:
 - All the area highways have been re-opened and traffic is free flowing.
 - The border is also open with regular traffic traveling through.
 - Plans are in place to maintain the level of RCMP and Sheriffs for the next several days to ensure no new road blocks/disruptions take place. All area highways will be flooded with patrols.
 - Should things remain quiet and no Social Media reports of new/potential protests developing, plans to start demobilizing will begin.
- As of 11:15 hrs Wed 16 Feb, TRANS report:

- Traffic is moving freely on the Hwy and all the way down to COUTTS. The remaining protestors have relocated to the land along the highway that the department provided access to, at RCMP request. A reduced Police presence remains on site.
- Traffic near COUTTS Border appears to have returned to normal daily average level based on available traffic count data.
- RCMP checkpoints have been removed from Highway 4, RCMP are maintaining a presence, spread out along Highway 4.
- The RCMP requested speed limit reduction that was in force southbound on Highway 4 at MILK RIVER to manage protestors has been removed, there is one speed limit reduction still in place for the rail crossing that may also be removed later on 16 Feb.
- TRANS has confirmed that Sheriffs are maintaining checkpoints north of CARWAY and DEL BONITA are active while the ports are open.

General Timeline of Events 15/16 Feb:

- As of 11:00 hrs Tue 15 Feb, COUTTS border resumed operations and traffic was able to proceed northbound and southbound.
- As of 13:30 hrs Tue 15 Feb, RCMP reported:
 - Protesters continued to leaving the area during morning and early afternoon of 15 Feb.
 - Some protestors remained at Check Point 10, but continued to dissipate.
 - Some protestors indicated intent to stay. Plans were in place for 16:00 hrs to move in with tow trucks and remove any vehicles still on site and deal with the owners/drivers as necessary. It was felt once the masses have left, the few remaining may have a change of heart.
 - No arrests or enforcement action had to be taken in relation to protestors leaving the area.
 - All resources, including Sheriffs, were requested to remain deployed to the area to continue to patrol and secure all areas over the weekend to ensure things are stable and pop-up road blocks do not occur.
- At 11:35 hrs Tue 15 Feb, 511 Alberta reported receiving updates from CBSA and Alberta RCMP stating that the Highway 4 US/Canada border at COUTTS had been reopened as the blockade has been disbanded. Some delays were expected due to the ongoing clearing of participant vehicles.
- At 11:49 hrs Tue 15 Feb, RCMP stated that traffic in the COUTTS area was moving slowly and the border crossing was open, and asking people to continue to avoid the area if possible.
- At 12:25 hrs Tue 15 Feb, 511 Alberta was updated to indicate a traffic advisory in place on Highway 4 in both directions near township road 14 for potential traffic delays and for motorists to be prepared to stop, as a result of protest activity being wound down and vehicles leaving the area.
- At 14:48 hrs Tue 15 Feb, the airspace restrictions (NOTAMS) above MILK RIVER, AB and above COUTTS, AB were cancelled.
- As of 16:13 hrs Tue 15 Feb, RCMP requested speed limit reductions remain in force southbound on Highway 4 at MILK RIVER. Speeds have been changed to 80km/h then 50km/h as drivers approach the blockade. Timing of lifting the speed reductions will depend on assessment of protestor reaction on 16 Feb, as RCMP were continuing to clear MILK RIVER area (HWY 4 and 501S/501N Intersections). Some protestors were moving to the area adjacent to Highway 4.

- As of 09:00 hrs Wed 16 Feb, RCMP reported:
 - The remaining protesters that were at Check Point 10 all left the area during afternoon Tue 15 Feb.
 - A legal protest site has been established, a large parcel of land capable of accommodating approximately 300 vehicles a short distance north of Check Point 10. This site is well back off the highway.
 - There are 45 RVs and 15 passenger vehicles at the legal protest site.
 - Overnight (15/16) was very quiet.
 - Sheriffs prisoner vans/staff were released late afternoon 15 Feb. High Capacity prisoner van was released as of morning 16 Feb.

Initial reaction to dissipation of COUTTS/MILK RIVER activity:

- A consistent call to further action has not been established following the departure of COUTTS/MILK RIVER protesters.
- Convoy and blockade organizers have indicated that there are future plans being developed, and that organizers are “regrouping” to assess options and consider future protest activities. Various individuals on social media have suggested reverting to slow-rolling convoys, periodic and temporary blockades, as well as the encouragement of periodic work stoppages. [Beyond planning associated to the LEGISLATURE, there is little specificity to these aspirational suggestions at this time].
- Social media sentiment towards the RCMP from protest supporters is generally negative, with many commenters expressing a belief that the RCMP has been deceitful and has committed illegal acts during the Coutts/Milk River protests.
- Online discourse following the breakdown of the MILK RIVER/COUTTS blockade remains focused on the charges laid against the 13 individuals. Disinformation continues to circulate suggesting that evidence seized in COUTTS was placed there by law enforcement as pretext for the arrests. [While categorically false, these conspiratorial narratives may nonetheless have resonance and tend to be amplified within supporter networks.]

Alberta Legislature / McDougall Centre

- Social media indicates new calls for convoys to attend the Alberta Legislative for 13:30 hrs on Sat 19 Feb. The convoy is intended to follow a separate march and speakers commencing at 12:30 hrs. Marshaling locations are indicated as SHERWOOD PARK FLYING J, NISKU BLACK JACKS and ACHESON FLYING J/HUSKY.
- Social media organizing for a ‘Throne Speech Convoy’ to the LEGISLATURE on Tue 22 Feb continues. Organizers intend to arrive at 12:00 and confront MLAs and staffers “as they walk into the assembly.” [This event appears to be gaining traction online. It has now been shared on multiple Facebook pages and groups.]

City of Edmonton & Environs

- AEMA POC will elevate to Level II from 10:00 – 19:00 hrs 19 Feb to support the City of Edmonton request for assistance for planned convoy protests on 19 Feb. Transportation will support by sharing information.

City of Calgary & Environs

- No attendance observed at Tue 15 Feb planned protest at CALGARY REMAND CENTRE calling for the release of Artur PAWLOWSKI.
- PAWLOWSKI was denied bail on 16 Feb, and will remain in remand until his next hearing on 11 Mar. [This may reignite protest activity focussed on the CALGARY REMAND CENTRE]

Regional Municipalities / Rural

- No additional updates at this time.

Ottawa "Freedom Convoy 2022"

- At 16:53 EST Wed 16 Feb, Ottawa Police disseminated a Notice to Demonstrators:
 - "The Ottawa Police Service wants to inform you that under provincial and federal legislation, you will face severe penalties if you do not cease further unlawful activity and remove your vehicle and/or property immediately from all unlawful protest sites.
 - You may be arrested and charged with criminal offences including but not limited to mischief, and potentially charged with a variety of other non-criminal offences.
 - Your vehicle and property may be seized or removed.
 - Your driver's licence may be suspended or cancelled.
 - CVOR (Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration) certificates may be suspended or cancelled.
 - Your personal or business bank accounts, including virtual currency, may be subject to examination and restriction.
 - If you bring a minor (a person under 18) with you to an unlawful protest site, you may be charged and fined up to \$5000 and/or potentially spend up to five years in prison.
 - Those who are delivering fuel and other supplies to those taking part in the unlawful demonstration can be charged.
 - Persons traveling to any other unlawful protest sites to participate in or support the unlawful demonstration can be charged.
 - Be aware that legislation now prohibits interference with any critical infrastructure including 400-series highways, railways, airports and international border crossings."
- At 16:45 EST Wed 16 Feb, Ottawa Police indicated:
 - The enhanced Integrated Command Centre (ICC) under a Unified Command – made up of the Ottawa Police Service (OPS), the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) -- has developed a clear and actionable plan to bring about a safe and peaceful end to the unlawful protests underway in downtown Ottawa. As the police of jurisdiction, the OPS remains the lead of this operation to return Ottawa to a state of normalcy.
 - Unlawful protesters have been warned that they must leave the area now. Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in blocking streets, is committing a criminal offence and may be arrested. You must immediately cease further unlawful activity or you will face charges. If you are arrested, you may be released on bail depending on factors contained in Part XVI of the *Criminal Code*. Officers are facilitating the safe departure of anyone who wants to leave.
 - Police are also aware there are children in the area and are focused on their safety. We have engaged a planning team and the Ottawa Children's Aid Society to encourage anyone with children in the area to leave and bring those children to a safe place. We also have a plan to ensure children are protected and cared for during any action.

- The public will be hearing about and seeing police actions in the coming hours and days. It will take time to do this right. We have appropriate and lawful methods to remove anyone who refuses. Every step will be considered and methodical. We ask for your patience and confidence.

Other Provinces / National

- EMERSON, MB BORDER CROSSING – as of 16:14 CST, [CBSA report](#) no delay for commercial and traveller flows.

International

- New Zealand's Freedom Convoy increased in size on 16 Feb with an estimated 450 vehicles blocking access to the country's Parliament. Law enforcement has stated that it will begin towing vehicles that do not leave.
- Three separate convoys in the United States intend to depart in early March to arrive in WASHINGTON DC. One convoy calling itself the "People's Convoy" is allegedly being organized Freedom Fighter Nation, a far-right conspiracy group led by lawyer Leigh DUNDAS.

MINISTRY UPDATES:

Justice & Solicitor General (JSG):

- PSIO continues to assess upcoming events and overall threat environment in collaboration with law enforcement and intelligence partners. Strategic estimates of near and longer term impact of 'Freedom Convoy' movement are underway.

Transportation (TRANS):

- Carriers traveling northbound can resume using the Alberta ports as normal.

Municipal Affairs:

- On 15 Feb, AEMA indicated that the City of Edmonton is highly likely to request POC assistance for planned demonstrations on 19 Feb.

Jobs, Economy, and Innovation (JEI):

- No additional updates.

Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Economic Development (AFRED):

- Movement of Agricultural Products (e.g. boxed meat) and Livestock from CBSA/CFIA and USCBP:
 - Southbound into US: Business as usual for carriers traveling southbound.
 - Northbound into Canada: Business as usual for carriers traveling northbound.

ASSESSMENT & STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS:

- Convoy and protest organizers in Alberta appear to be entering a reassessment phase to determine what courses of action will allow them to continue their opposition to remaining government public health mandates while simultaneously avoiding the potential consequences of being in violation of the *Emergencies Act*.
- Convoy and blockade participants appear to perceive that they are quietly supported by a much larger number of individuals than is being acknowledge in media reporting and public opinion

polling. There appears to be a continued belief that ongoing protest activity will encourage a greater number of participants to form a critical mass and encourage the abandonment of public health orders and enforcement. [This is contrary to observed attendance rates at recent protest actions throughout the province, specifically those in Edmonton.]

FORECAST:

- While some organizers appear to be attempting to offset the pressures lost with the breakdown of the Milk River/Coutts border blockade with additional unlawful convoy activity, the level of activity has declined overall. In the near-term, it is likely that most organizers will attempt to refocus on more conventional lawful protest activity with the intent of dissociating from illegal conduct and regaining broader public participation.
- The invocation of the Federal *Emergencies Act* is likely to catalyze a shift away from public health mandates as the primary grievance. Broader narratives of fundamental freedoms have potential to mobilize greater support for lawful protests against Federal Government actions, while also providing hard-line elements with additional radicalizing narratives centred on anti-authority beliefs. While cognitive radicalization will likely remain most prominent amongst these hard-line elements, it remains feasible that behavioural radicalization will occur in isolated individuals or groups.

PREPARED BY: Intelligence Bureau, Provincial Security & Intelligence Office (PSIO)

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